

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Coundon

Victoria Lane, Coundon, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 8NN

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies across year groups and subjects. The pace and pitch of work does not consistently meet pupils' needs, and this contributes to unevenness in pupils' progress.
- Although improving, pupils do not make consistently good progress across a wide range of subjects. Improving attainment and progress in mathematics are not yet securely reflected in reading and writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than their peers and lower proportions reach greater depths of understanding. Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be absent than their peers.
- In partnership with the local authority, middle leaders are developing their subject expertise. However, improvement strategies are still evolving and have not yet resulted in consistently good outcomes for pupils.
- The wider curriculum does not consistently enable pupils to develop deeper understanding across a wide range of subjects. Work to promote pupils' awareness of a range of equalities is not fully developed.
- Governors are building their expertise and ability to hold leaders to account. Over time, they have not been successful in challenging declining outcomes rapidly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has acted determinedly to improve the quality of teaching. Her actions have arrested decline and are contributing to improving outcomes for pupils.
- The new chair of the governing body is revitalising governance. She is developing systems to enable governors to evaluate school effectiveness more sharply.
- Effective leadership, close planning and thoughtful assessment are enabling children to make good and improving progress in the early years.
- Leaders and teachers are committed to the well-being of pupils. They know their pupils very well. Pupils behave well as they feel valued and supported.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by:
 - securing further consistency in the quality of teaching so that recent improvements can be extended to all classes
 - setting work and targeting support more closely to enable disadvantaged pupils to make more rapid progress and achieve higher levels of attainment
 - pitching work carefully and modifying the curriculum to enable pupils to work more regularly at greater depths of understanding.
- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - further developing the roles of middle leaders so that improvement strategies can be implemented to consistent effect across all year groups
 - developing the curriculum so that pupils can gain knowledge, skills and understanding in depth across a wide range of subjects and so that pupils can raise their awareness of a wider range of equalities
 - building upon recent improvements to governance so that governors can fully implement new procedures to both support leaders and check the effect of improvement strategies.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has worked intensively to address a substantial decline in pupils' progress between 2015 and 2017. With the arrival of a new deputy headteacher in January 2017, she has built leadership capacity and challenged weaknesses in teaching. She has raised expectations and introduced a sustained focus on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. While these actions are beginning to result in improvements in pupils' outcomes, this is not yet consistent across subjects and phases.
- The headteacher has worked closely with local authority partners to develop the subject expertise and leadership skills of middle leaders. They are developing a more assured understanding of standards and have a stronger role in leading improvement. These actions are contributing to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment but have not secured consistent improvements across classes and year groups.
- The headteacher has refined performance management arrangements to make teachers more accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes. She has provided additional support for teachers to improve their practice and challenged teaching that has not met her expectations. These processes are increasing levels of accountability and challenging weaker teaching.
- Leaders check the use of pupil premium funding on pupils' progress at regular intervals. Teachers are more aware of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and interventions are helping to improve pupils' progress, although differences in attainment, progress and attendance remain.
- Leaders have worked with local schools and the local authority to develop a stronger understanding of standards. External moderation of pupils' work in 2018 at key stage 1, found teachers' standards to be accurate. While some aspects of school self-evaluation are generous, leaders have accurately identified improvement priorities and have a better understanding of standards.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) shares updates on pupils' progress with her link governor and this is helping leaders to gain a better understanding of pupils' progress and the effect of additional funding. Leaders use funding for additional support in school and to commission specialist support from external partners. Leaders have been less successful in securing regular parental attendance at review meetings and in capturing the views of pupils on the support they receive.
- Early years leaders have worked with local authority colleagues to improve the early years provision and check the accuracy of assessment. This work is helping to develop a stimulating and supportive environment that is enabling children to make better progress.
- Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum, although, on occasions, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work at greater depths of understanding across a wide range of subjects. Leaders provide a range of activities to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Some aspects of the school's work to

promote pupils' awareness of a range of equalities are less well developed.

- Leaders are using additional funding to increase pupils' participation in a wider variety of sports and physical activity, including break-dancing, netball, tae kwando, cricket and trampolining. In 2017, over two thirds of pupils participated in after-school sports clubs and a similar proportion accessed specialist coaching.

Governance of the school

- The new chair of governors is in the process of revitalising many aspects of governance. She has worked with local authority partners to develop the expertise of the governing body and to respond proactively to the decline in standards in recent years. She has reviewed committee structures and monitoring activities to bring fresh challenge to school leaders. This is improving governors' capacity to hold leaders to account for important aspects of performance.
- Governors reflect upon their skills and expertise. New governors are recruited according to their interests and ability to commit to the demands of their roles. Governors now receive much more regular insight into pupils' progress. Minutes from governors' meetings show that they are asking leaders more searching questions on important aspects of school performance.
- Governors have experienced a range of training opportunities to improve their abilities to check many aspects of the school's work. They have additional plans to invite subject leaders to meetings to discuss the emerging impact of improvement plans. While some of these processes are at an early stage of development, governors are on a clear pathway to improvement.
- Governors have a clear awareness of the impact of pupil premium funding in supporting pupils' social and emotional engagement through initiatives such as breakfast club and residential trips and visits. They have a less assured awareness of its impact on their attendance and academic progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school. They act upon any concerns over pupils' welfare and record these concerns appropriately.
- Leaders have commissioned audits of safeguarding practice to check that arrangements meet requirements. A number of staff have received additional safeguarding training to spread specialised understanding of pupils' welfare needs across the school.
- Pupils talked to said they felt safe and happy in school. They feel that bullying is rare and are confident that adults would address any concerns over bullying. The inspector talked to a number of parents and carers as they brought their children to school and all were appreciative of the care and support their children received.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time varies between subjects and phases. This contributes to varying rates of progress across subjects and for different groups of pupils.
- While there is evidence that teachers are pitching work more appropriately to enable increasing proportions of pupils to reach expected standards, teaching does not consistently enable pupils to work at greater depths of understanding throughout key stage 2.
- Senior leaders and subject leaders have worked with local authority partners to improve the accuracy of assessment and strengthen teaching in English and mathematics. Subject leaders have led training at staff meetings and are building improvement, but initiatives are not yet being implemented to consistent effect across classes.
- Subject leaders have invested considerable resources into raising standards of reading. Pupils are encouraged to build fluency by reading a wider range of books and are using new strategies to analyse texts in greater depth. These approaches contributed to much improved progress, as seen in the provisional outcomes for the end of key stage 2 in 2018, although standards remain below those seen nationally.
- The inspector listened to pupils read across key stages 1 and 2 and talked to pupils about their reading. Pupils read accurately, showing understanding of the texts they read. Lower-ability pupils were generally able to use their reading or decoding skills to pronounce words. Pupils enjoyed new reading schemes that were encouraging them to read more books. Most-able readers did not regularly select books that provided sufficient challenge in language and content.
- Teachers are introducing new strategies to develop pupils' writing in English and across the wider curriculum. This contributed to improving outcomes at the end of key stage 2, and particularly at key stage 1, in 2018. Work in books shows that improving standards are not consistent across classes and that girls' writing is typically better than that of boys.
- The subject leader for mathematics has worked with teachers to modify the curriculum and to bring in more regular opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning through problem-solving activities. These initiatives are contributing to improving progress and attainment in key stages 1 and 2.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers secure positive attitudes to learning. Pupils were seen reflecting upon the power of modal verbs and thoughtfully discussing differences between formal and informal language. On other occasions, pupils were not moved on swiftly enough in their learning.
- Teachers set homework in line with school guidance. Pupils feel this is encouraging them to read more books and to extend their learning across subjects.
- Leaders and teachers develop plans and work with external partners to customise support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In many instances, teaching assistants provide effective support, although there is still variability in the progress made over time by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

- There are strengths in many aspects of the wide curriculum. Leaders provide learning links and enrichment experiences to develop pupils' social confidence and their wider knowledge of the world. In books, the picture is less consistent, as pupils are, at times, not given opportunities to develop subject-specific knowledge and skills in sufficient depth across a wide range of subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers know their pupils well and are receptive to their needs. Pupils talked to said they felt safe and well supported. One child said this was a school where 'every child is noticed', a view shared by many pupils.
- Pupils develop a sense of responsibility through roles as school council members. They contribute to the wider community through their charity work, links with their local church and taking part in events such as their church mission week. Leaders have introduced initiatives to support pupils' emotional well-being, through specific interventions for individual pupils and wider approaches, such as yoga.
- Pupils develop their self-confidence and understanding of the world through a wide variety of trips and visits. Pupils have expanded their horizons on residential trips to France and by embracing new personal challenges at outdoor pursuit centres.
- Pupils believe that bullying does not happen often, and they are confident that if it did occur, teachers would address their concerns effectively.
- Leaders have developed pupils' awareness of the threats they may face online. Pupils have worked with the NSPCC to develop their understanding of how to stay safe and they have worked with other groups to help to stay safe on the roads.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and helpful, for example holding doors open for one another and visitors. They move around the building in a calm and respectful manner.
- Pupils are articulate and keen to discuss their learning and their views of the school. They are willing to express their views as they feel valued. They show a pride in many aspects of their school community.
- Pupils typically work productively and enjoy their learning. On some occasions, learning behaviours are not fully developed, as pupils are not as clear on the steps they can take to reach greater depths of understanding.
- Overall rates of attendance improved in 2017/18 and rates of persistent absence reduced. The spike in fixed-term exclusions seen in 2016 has reduced and exclusions are now rare. The vast majority of pupils have attendance levels that compare favourably with those seen nationally, although disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be absent than their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because pupils do not make strong progress across a range of subjects and differences exist between year groups and between different groups of pupils.
- Between 2015 and 2017, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 declined significantly. The headteacher and her team have worked assiduously to arrest this decline, securing much improved provisional outcomes in 2018. However, overall outcomes are not yet good.
- At key stage 2, pupils are making much improved progress and securing higher levels of attainment in mathematics. Pupils' progress in reading in 2018 also improved from the extremely weak progress seen over the previous three years. However, the proportions of pupils achieving expected standards and reaching greater depths of understanding in reading and writing remain below those seen nationally.
- Over time, teaching does not provide sufficient challenge to enable pupils to work at greater depths of understanding. The proportions of pupils working at greater depth have been below those seen nationally, although improvements were evident at the end of key stage 1 in 2018. Teachers are developing strategies to build greater depth into the curriculum, but these are not fully implemented across all year groups.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently strong progress. Despite a marked improvement in 2018, the proportion who have achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 has been below that seen nationally. Although there is evidence of improving progress and attainment, differences persist.
- Leaders and teachers have secured improving outcomes at key stage 1. The proportions of pupils reaching expected standards now exceed those seen nationally and much higher proportions of pupils are working at greater depths of understanding.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics screening check was below that seen nationally in 2017. Provisional results for 2018 show a slight decline.
- A detailed scrutiny of books shows that while standards are becoming more consistent, variance continues in the quality of work between classes and groups of pupils. Girls' writing is typically better than that of boys. Pupils are given opportunities to access a broad and balanced curriculum, but they do not always develop subject-specific skills in the wider curriculum in sufficient depth.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points, although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been below that seen nationally.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years teachers have worked with local authority partners to enhance the curriculum and improve provision for children. They plan the curriculum carefully, providing children with a wider understanding of the world while developing their

emerging skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Early years leaders work with parents and local nurseries to develop a clear understanding of children's abilities and interests on arrival. They know their children well and this helps children to settle quickly and make good progress in their play and learning.
- Leaders have worked to develop and consolidate their new Nursery provision for three-year-old children from September 2017. This provision is expanding, and children are making better progress as a result of the improving continuity between Nursery and Reception class.
- In Reception class, the teacher captured children's imagination by using her witch's costume and cauldron to encourage children to consider the different sounds that needed to go into different pots. Children carefully voiced the 's' and 't' sounds before eagerly looking for objects beginning with these letters around the classroom.
- Children have regular opportunities to develop their counting and number skills in their numeracy books. Teachers and teaching assistants work with children to develop their pencil grip and improve their letter formation over time.
- As reflected in their learning journals, pupils have a wide range of experiences, trips and visits that develop their understanding of the world and their self-confidence. Children had visited local forests, garden centres and worked with the police.
- Teachers involve parents in their children's learning by sharing examples of their children's learning. Teachers have provided reading workshops to help parents to support their children's reading at home.
- Children's work and progress are captured through a wide range of tasks. This work shows that children make good progress from their starting points. Teachers and key workers check children's progress regularly. They adapt their teaching to meet children's needs. Teachers have worked with local authority partners to develop an accurate picture of children's abilities and learning needs.
- While children are making good and improving progress from their starting points, the proportion that exceed early learning goals is below that seen nationally.
- Safeguarding practices in the early years are effective. Teachers carry out regular risk assessments. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements. The emphasis on children's welfare that characterises much of the school's work extends to the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	114264
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10042215

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Caine
Headteacher	Madeleine Brown
Telephone number	01388 602608
Website	www.st-josephs.durham.sch.uk
Email address	coundonstjosephs@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities support is well above average.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club that are run by school staff.
- A new deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2017.
- A new chair of governors took up post in the spring term in 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in school. The headteacher joined the inspector on many of these observations.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- The inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector met the education development partner from the local authority and talked to the deputy director of education for the diocese by telephone.
- The inspectors met groups of pupils and talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at the school in lessons and at lunchtime. He also listened to pupils read in different year groups.
- The inspector carried out an extensive review of pupils' books.
- The inspector looked at the school's development plans and information on pupils' progress. He also considered arrangements for safeguarding and scrutinised records relating to attendance and behaviour. The inspector looked at a range of reports and local authority documents evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The inspectors talked to 10 parents as they dropped their children off at school on day 1 of the inspection and considered six free-text responses from parents. He also considered the two responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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